

Dr. David A. Share
Michigan State Medical Society Board of Directors
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Thank you Chairman Johnson and members of the Committee for the opportunity to speak this morning. My name is David Share, and I am a physician serving as Medical Director of The Corner Health Center, a community health center for teens, and the children of teens, in Ypsilanti. I also have a Masters in Public Health and devote a considerable portion of my career and time to population based health, working on statewide quality initiatives at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and with colleagues at the Michigan State Medical Society, which has more than 16,000 members across the state and which I am representing today.

First, let me compliment you on your commitment to bring the issue of smoke-free workplaces to the attention of your Committee at such an early stage of the current legislative session. As a physician who has personally seen the impact smoking has had on patients in Michigan, legislative action to assure clean indoor air is deserving of the urgency your Committee has afforded to it.

It is the goal of the Michigan State Medical Society to work with the legislature to pass a meaningful smoke-free law in our state as soon as possible. It is not our intent that this law be the first step toward an outright ban on smoking or a ban on selling tobacco. Our advocacy is targeted at secondhand smoke and the risks that this creates for employees and non-smoking citizens in public places.

As with any disease, physicians focus on the best scientific evidence to arrive at a diagnosis. In regard to second hand smoke, the evidence is clear, compelling and chilling.

Second hand smoke causes about 50,000 deaths each year in the United States, including 46,000 from heart disease, 3,400 from lung cancer, and 430 from sudden infant death syndrome ("crib death"). Those estimates come from a comprehensive and authoritative review of the evidence in a report published by the California Environmental Protection Agency released in June of 2005.

Of course second hand smoke causes a lot of nonfatal disease as well. For example, the California EPA report estimates that exposure to second hand smoke is responsible for 790,000 excess health care visits for middle ear infections each year in the United States.

In June of 2006, the U.S. Surgeon General released another comprehensive report on the health effects of exposure to second hand smoke. That report, also based on a rigorous review of the scientific evidence, reached two conclusions that are particularly relevant to your decision making.

- “The scientific evidence indicates that there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke.”
- “Eliminating smoking in indoor spaces fully protects nonsmokers from exposure to secondhand smoke. Separating smokers from nonsmokers, clearing the air, and ventilating buildings cannot eliminate [the] exposure of nonsmokers to secondhand smoke.”

The Surgeon General’s report concluded that second hand smoke causes the following diseases and conditions:

- among adults—lung cancer and heart disease; and
- among infants and children—reduced birth-weight, sudden infant death syndrome, respiratory illnesses including pneumonia and bronchitis, middle ear disease, and asthma.

Many other authoritative bodies have come to similar conclusions, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (which has categorized second hand smoke as a “group A”—or known— human carcinogen).

These serious health effects of exposure to second hand smoke are not surprising when you consider what is in it. Second hand smoke contains more than 4,000 chemical compounds. More than 50 of these chemicals are known to cause cancer and many others are toxic in other ways. The chemicals include, to name just a few, acetone (a nail polish remover), ammonia (a toilet cleaner), arsenic (an ant poison), butane (used in lighter fluid), cadmium (used in batteries), carbon monoxide (the poison in car exhaust), hydrogen cyanide (another strong poison), methane (sewer gas), methanol (rocket fuel), naphthalene (mothballs), toluene (an industrial solvent), and Polonium-210, the radioactive element used recently to fatally poison a former Russian spy. Many of these chemicals are at higher concentrations in the sidestream smoke, which is emitted from the lit end of the cigarette, than in the mainstream smoke (the smoke inhaled by the smoker).

Mr. Chairman, the scientific evidence is not in doubt. Exposure to secondhand smoke is a proven, serious and preventable health hazard. Appropriate action to protect people in Michigan is long overdue.

My patients, who are mostly poor young adults, often work in public settings where smoking is allowed. This is not a choice for them. They are desperate for work and they find it where they can. Far too often, their health, productivity and future wellbeing is compromised because they don’t have the protection that House Bill 4341 will provide them.

This is not simply a matter of public policy. It is a choice between health and illness; life and death. It is a choice between Michigan's economic viability and economic vulnerability. It is a choice between forging ahead, joining with the majority of states across America and the industrialized world, and lagging behind. I implore you, in the interest of Michigan's wellbeing, to take the lead on this crucial issue.

I also urge you to pass this bill in memory of Ron Davis, MD, the namesake of House Bill 4341. As many of you know, Doctor Davis died November 6 after a courageous battle with pancreatic cancer. He was 52. Doctor Davis, a preventive medicine physician, served as director of the CDC's Office on Smoking and Health, chief medical officer of the Michigan Department of Public Health, Past President of the American Medical Association and most recently as the director of the Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention at the Henry Ford Health System in Detroit. Doctor Davis was a lifelong champion of tobacco cessation and wellness issues, and provided testimony on this same legislation in this House two years ago.

I can think of no better way to honor the memory and legacy of Doctor Davis than to pass comprehensive smoke free worksite legislation now.